

ILLINOIS TERMINAL INTERURBAN STATION

Decatur



Credit: Ayn Owens

“Trains have a strong history in the shaping of the city of Decatur, and the Interurban Rail Service story is not widely known. History of the Heartland looks forward to assisting in this project and encouraging some joint partnerships among our consortium to assist in the awareness campaign.”

BRET ROBERTSON

CHAIR, HISTORY OF THE HEARTLAND



ILLINOIS TERMINAL INTERURBAN STATION



LOCATION

1065 N. Van Dyke Street
Decatur, Macon County

YEAR BUILT

1931

ARCHITECT

Unknown

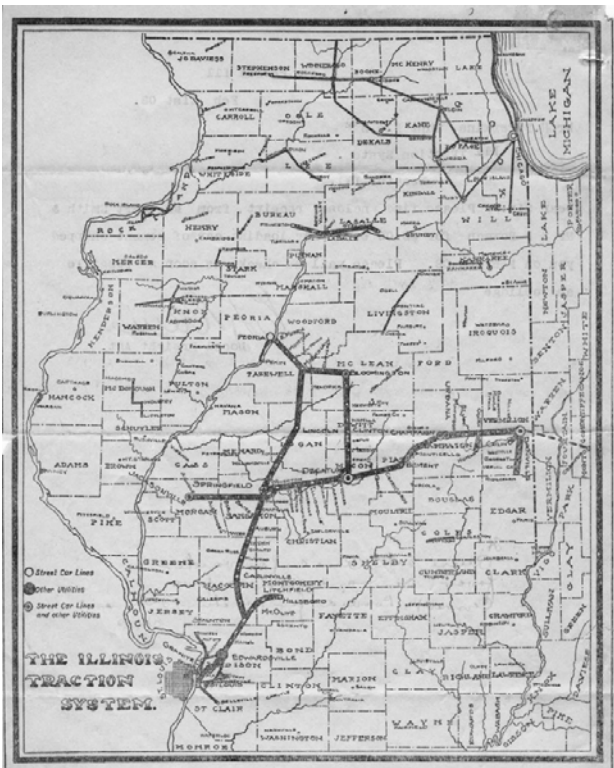
CURRENT OWNER

Faith Community Assembly



WHY IT'S ENDANGERED

The Illinois Terminal Interurban Station has been a community asset for nearly a century, first serving as a rail station and later to house church social services. The current owner, a church, intends to vacate and sell the building. Neighbors and the Decatur organization, History of the Heartland, are concerned that the church's departure will lead to deterioration and the permanent loss of social services from this historic building. In the near term, the station will need a roof replacement to prevent water infiltration. Local advocates believe the station can still serve the neighborhood and be a source of much-needed investment. They hope to work with the City of Decatur and nonprofit partners toward a reuse solution that saves the Illinois Terminal Interurban Station while benefiting the community in which it's located.



HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE & BACKGROUND

The Illinois Terminal Railroad Company (ITC) – also known as the Interurban – operated electric passenger rail service from 1896 until 1956. This passenger service connected several Illinois urban areas together, boosting economy throughout the state. Built in 1931 at 1065 N. Van Dyke Street, the rail station in Decatur connected the community

Photos courtesy: History of the Heartland



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to Illinois cities such as Champaign, Springfield and Bloomington. Passenger travel decreased during the Great Depression, but the station retained importance for bringing in workers, freight and college students at Millikin University.

Known as the Illinois Traction System (ITS) until 1937, the Illinois Terminal Railroad was an affiliate of the Illinois Power and Light Company. As an electric powered company, conductors and engineers could manage smoother, more frequent stops without sacrificing a great amount of time. This made interurban connection easier and profitable. With a wide connecting system, the interurban rail lines garnered significant interest throughout Illinois.

“The Road of Good Service” served freight as well as passengers. While some of the tracks were not precisely equipped to sustain heavy loads, the company either used shorter, specialized trains or created bypass trackage.



Credit: Ayn Owens

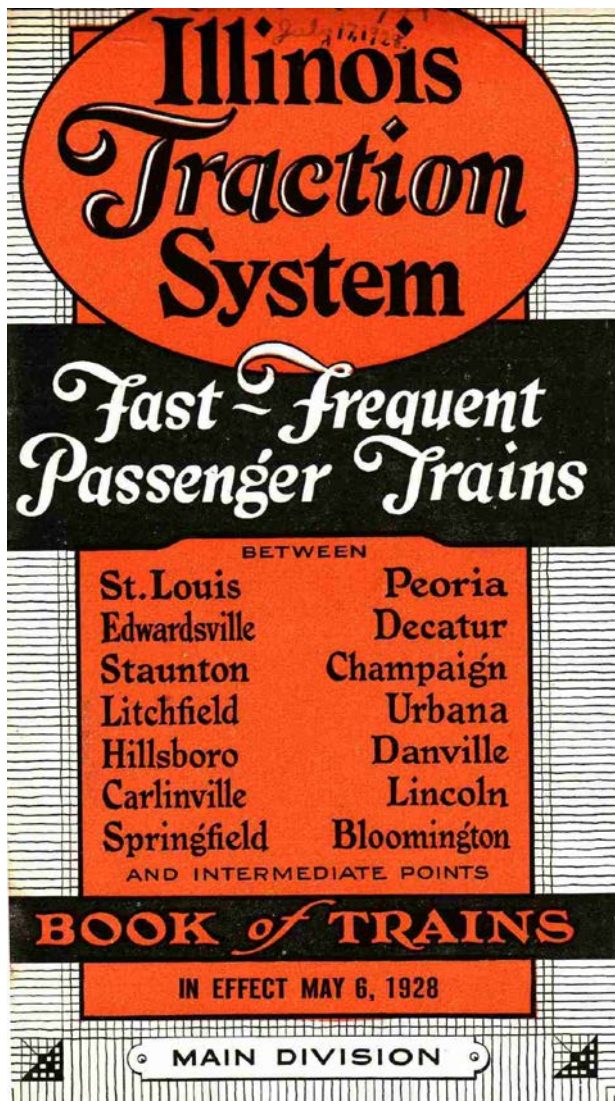
The Great Depression greatly affected the ITS. Lines were relinquished and affiliations fizzled. To combat this, it reorganized as the Illinois Terminal Railroad (ITR) in 1937. A contract with the United States Postal Service gave the ITR its boost to continue for almost another two decades. Unfortunately for the rail



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service, automobiles became the predominant mode of travel, causing interurban rail passenger service to be unprofitable. By 1956, passenger service ended and the majority of the tracks were used for diesel-powered trains. In 1981, Norfolk and Western Railway bought ITR's remaining interest. Many of the ITR stations have been demolished and adjacent tracks removed. The headquarters of the former Illinois Traction System in Champaign was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.

For the past 15 years, the Illinois Terminal Interurban Station in Decatur has operated as a house of religious worship. In addition to religious services, the church has used the historic station for educational classes serving students working toward a high school diploma.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact [History of the Heartland](#) with ideas for new users or potential buyers.

Participate in [Decatur Historic Preservation Week](#) (online and local) May 16, 2021-May 22, 2021, which will include information on efforts to find a reuse for the historic station. The Illinois Terminal Interurban Station will host an open house on Monday, May 17, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. as part of the Decatur Historic Preservation Week series of events.

FURTHER READING

[Photos: Illinois Terminal Railroad](#)
Herald&Review, March 19, 2020

[A Railroad Runs Through It](#)
Millikin University, April 16, 2008

[Illinois Terminal Railroad](#)
McLean Count Museum of History

[Illinois Traction Society](#)

[Illinois Traction System: an album](#)
Trolley Sparks, Central Electric Railmans' Association, Bulletin 98, November 1954